

# PENALTY MISS CAPS IT ALL!

A MISSED penalty by John Delaney in injury time of Saturday's Isthmian League match at Loakes Park just about summed up Wycombe Wanderers' frustrations against Clapton — a side second from the foot of the table.

After a blistering first 20 minutes in which Wycombe should have been at least four up, the Blues spent the remaining 73 minutes struggling to overcome a Clapton side that fought all the way but was totally inadequate in defence — as their 82 goals against this season testifies.

It was ridiculous really. Wycombe were streets ahead in every department but just could not score goals. This decisive factor could so easily have brought their downfall — and they would have had only themselves to blame had the visitors netted three chances late in the game.

Much has been said about Wanderers' defeats by the odd goal this season. But one thing is certain, there are no prizes for pressure and they will continue to struggle as long as they fail to turn their superiority into goals.

We've seen it all before, the classic example being the Amateur Cup defeat by Cheshunt. Dominating all but a few minutes of that match, Wycombe finished up 1-0 losers having squandered chance after chance.

In that game, however, and many others this season, Wycombe kept on plugging away. On Saturday the heads began to drop and the effort slackened.

Unfortunately it was just my luck to miss the first few minutes due to a British Rail cancellation. During that time, I am told, Wanderers played some of the best football.

Alan Gane, one of Wycombe's few successes on the day, put them ahead with a well taken goal after 12 minutes. Tony Amos supplied the pass, Alan crashing the ball past 'keeper Lucas on the volley.

Only a superb reflex save from Lucas a minute later, foiled Amos after Delaney headed down a free

kick from Williams. Sixty seconds after that, Delaney and Bullock exchanged headers in the penalty area, laying on a chance for Langfield but Smith saved his weak shot.

The fact that all three Wycombe players were allowed to play the ball without a single challenge, typified Clapton's deficiencies in defence. Amos and Holifield were given acres of space in which to move but although the approach was good, the finishing was shocking.

situation was given a free header every time.

Somehow the visitors survived but the main damage was being done to Wycombe. Some excellent attacks were ruined only by the finishing. In the 35th minute Delaney sent a glorious 30 yard cross-field pass to Amos on the wing. Cutting inside, the leading scorer laid the ball off for Langfield, who blazed high over the bar.

Most of Wanderers' raids started from Gane and Pritchard

in midfield. These two worked ceaselessly to promote attacks and it must have been depressing to see their efforts go to waste.

About the only danger from Clapton came from a 25 yarder by Indian forward Singh, who later in the game could have won the match for the visitors.

became noticeable that Clapton were having more to say in attack as the toll of Wycombe's exertions began to tell.

The passing, so accurate early on, began to become ragged and the chances grew fewer and fewer. Clapton, on the other hand, were improving steadily.

confidence by the minute, the move brought little success, with Rundle taking a long time to settle.

Alan Gane had a strong appeal for a penalty turned down by referee Hall after 67 minutes but two minutes later Singh again missed a great chance for a Clapton equaliser when he miscued with only Maskell to beat.

However they were lucky not to concede another goal in the closing 15 minutes. Bullock was only inches away from making it 2-0 in the 75th minute and then Lucas pushed a full blooded drive from Langfield over the top, after a Pritchard header had struck the angle of the crossbar.

Taylor came on for Haysman, who was earlier booked for kicking the ball away before a Wycombe free kick and Clapton's last chance came in the 83rd when Maskell flung himself full length to thwart George Lewzey.

The final ignominy came two minutes into injury time, however, when Wanderers were awarded a penalty. Lowry's poor pass back was gathered by Holifield who shot against the diving Lucas. Holifield gathered possession and crossed only for Lowry to stick up a hand and divert the ball away.

The referee had no hesitation in awarding the spot kick and it seemed those who had stayed on for the final minutes had been rewarded. But it was not to be. John Delaney stepped up and only half hit the ball which struck the post and rebounded into the safe arms of 'keeper Lucas. It was an apt finale.

**WYCOMBE:** J. Maskell; D. Gamblin, D. Bullock, J. Dulaney, P. Birdseye; R. Williams, A. Gane, L. Pritchard; B. Langfield, A. Amos (sub. I. Rundle 63 mins.), M. Holifield.

**CLAPTON:** P. Lucas; R. Lowry, C. Warden, C. Haysman (sub. A. Taylor 77 mins.), J. Coleman; M. Richardson, M. Singh, R. Spicer, J. McKenzie, S. Kirby, G. Lewzey.

**Referee:** C. Hall (Tolworth).  
**Half time:** 1-1. **Goalscorer:** Wycombe — Gane (12).  
**Attendance:** 836.

By **STUART EARP; Wycombe W. 1, Clapton 0**